

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 OMB-01 /068 W

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R 032113Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9218

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0472

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: NATIONALIST PARTY CONVENTION

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE NATIONALIST PARTY HELD ITS ANNUAL CONVENTION ON FEBRUARY 1, AND ADOPTED A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. THE DECLARATION CONDEMNED THE PRESENT MILITARY REGIME AND BLAMED IT FOR HONDURAS' ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. THE DECLARATION ALSO "DEMANDED" A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY AND CALLED ON PARTY MEMBERS TO INTENSIFY A "CIVIC STRUGGLE" FOR THAT GOAL. NATIONALIST LEADER RICARDO ZUNIGA AUGUSTINUS TOLD POLOFF THAT HE IS ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN ALLIES FROM OTHER GROUPS TO HELP IN THE STRUGGLE FOR A RETURN TO FREE ELECTION AND CONSTITUTIONALITY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NATIONALIST PARTY HELD ITS CONVENTION ON FEBRUARY 1 IN THE PARTY HEADQUARTERS. IT HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN SCHEDULED FOR A LONGER PERIOD BUT ALL ITEMS OF BUSINESS WERE COMPLETED IN A LONG ONE DAY PERIOD. SIXTY-FOUR DELEGATES FROM THE EIGHTEEN DEPARTMENTS ATTENDED THE CONVENTION.

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2. RAFAEL BARDALES BUESO, PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL COMMIT-

TEE, CHAIRED THE MEETING. THE ENTIRE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WAS ALSO IN ATTENDANCE AS WAS THE PARTY LEADER AND COORDINATOR GENERAL, RICARDO ZUNIGA AUGUSTINUS.

3. THERE WERE NO ELECTIONS OF ANY KIND OR ANY DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING REORGANIZATION OF THE PARTY STRUCTURE. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO RATIFY A PREVIOUSLY PREPARED DECLARATION. IN ADDITION, A REPORT WAS GIVEN WHICH BROADLY DETAILED THE GEGOTIATIONS CARRIED ON WITH THE LIBERALS IN ORDER TO FORM A UNITED FRONT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.

4. THE DECLARATION CONDEMNED THE DEMAGOGY OF THE MILITARY REGIME AND ITS ARBITRARY PRACTICES, AS WELL AS ITS FOMENTATION OF CLASS STRUGGLE. IT POINTED OUT THAT SUCH A REGIME IS IN NO POSITION TO COMBAT THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING HONDURAS SUCH AS INFLATION, A DEFICIT IN THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, LACK OF INVESTMENT AND WIDE-SPREAD UNEMPLOYMENT. THE DECLARATION "DEMANDED" THE IMMEDIATE CARRYING OUT OF MEASURES TO PERMIT A RETURN TO FREE ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONALITY. IT CALLS ON MEMBERS OF THE PARTY AND OF ALL OTHER GROUPS TO INTENSIFY A "CIVIC STRUGGLE" TO REGAIN THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS.

5. POLOFF SPOKE TO ZUNIGA DURING THE CONVENTION ABOUT HIS FUTURE PLANS. ZUNIGA POINTED OUT THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN PARTY DISCIPLINE IN THE FACE OF SLIM FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND THE NATURE OF THE REGIME. HE SAID THAT THE PARTY WILL IMMEDIATELY EMBARK ON A NEW ACTION PROGRAM IN CONCERT WITH THE LIBERALS AND OTHER GROUPS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE REGIME FOR A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY. HE COMMENTED THAT HE HOPES TO KEEP THE PARTY'S ACTIVITIES JUST BELOW THE LEVEL THAT WOULD PROVOKE REPRISALS FROM THE GOVERNMENT. HE ADMITTED THAT THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN PRESSURING LOPEZ FOR A RETURN TO FULL PARTY ACTIVITY AND CONSTITUTIONALITY ARE FORMIDABLE BUT STATED THAT HE SEES NO FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVE.

6. COMMENT: ZUNIGA WAS IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE CONVENTION AND THERE WAS NO OPPOSITION OF ANY KIND. IN OTHER WORDS, IT WAS A CARBON COPY OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY CONFIDENTIAL

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VENTIONS OF RECENT YEARS. THERE SEEMS LITTLE QUESTION, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS WELL AWARE OF THE DANGER TO THE PARTY'S INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND HOLD ON POPULAR SENTIMENT IF THE PARTY APPEARS TO BE LANGUISHING. THEREFORE, THE ONLY COURSE OF ACTION OPEN TO HIM IS TO LOOK FOR ALL POSSIBLE ALLIES IN AN INTENSIFICATION OF THE CAMPAIGN TO RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY. AT THIS STAGE IT SEEMS LITTLE MORE THAN A GESTURE TO REASSURE THE FAITHFUL THAT THE PARTY IS STILL

ALIVE.
SANCHEZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION REFORM, PARTY LINE, PARTY MEETINGS, REORGANIZATIONS, PARTY LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TEGUCI00472
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750040-0977
From: TEGUCIGALPA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750276/aaaacqxf.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <09 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NATIONALIST PARTY CONVENTION BEGIN SUMMARY. THE NATIONALIST PARTY HELD ITS ANNUAL CONVENTION
TAGS: PINT, HO, NATIONALIST PARTY, (ZUNIGA AUGUSTINUS, RICARDO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006